



# U.S. Interests Section Newsletter

Information for American Citizens in Cuba

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## USINT Celebrates Independence Day on the Fourth of July

On July 4, 2008, USINT held its annual fourth of July party at the residence of the Chief of Mission (COM) in Havana City. Over six hundred guests including several American citizen wardens attended for the festivities.

The ceremony included the traditional presentation of the American and Marine flags by our Marine Security Guards, recorded greetings from noted Cuban Americans including Willy Chirino, and a live transmission of the music and fireworks display from the Mall in Washington, DC. During the event, our American Citizen Services unit provided absentee voting information to the Americans in attendance.

In his speech Mr. Parmly said that the 4th of July is the day “we remember our commitment to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, which continues to be the bar by which we measure how far we have come and how much remains to be done.”

This was Mr. Parmly’s final Fourth of July celebration in Havana. After a three year tour he left Havana to return to Washington on July 8.

The New Chief of Mission, Jonathan Farrar is scheduled to arrive sometime in mid-July.

We were happy to invite all our Wardens this year and hope to see you all at our annual Warden’s meeting later this year.



## GOODBYE MESSAGE FROM U.S. INTERESTS SECTION CHIEF OF MISSION MICHAEL E. PARMLY

I believe that no work done at the U.S. Interests Section is more important than providing services to American citizens resident in Cuba. In this highly politicized environment, and in a highly politicized year, the Interests Section must serve ALL Americans. We encourage you to reach out to us and welcome Americans to visit the Interests Section when they are in Havana. We are here for you, and American Citizen Services remains our top priority.

I will leave Havana with fond memories of the people I met here and thank you all for the warm reception I have received from American citizens living in Cuba. I would especially like to thank our Wardens for their service to the Interests Section and to their fellow American citizens. I hope that you have found the Interests Section to be an inviting place to visit during my tenure here and I hope that you will show my successor the same level of hospitality and friendship that you have shown me.

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### Remember the Maine!

USINT community honors the victims of the USS Maine on Memorial Day.



On May 26<sup>th</sup> The USINT community traveled to the Colon commentary in Havana to commemorate Memorial Day and to remember the 266 American servicemen who lost their lives in the explosion that sank the U.S.S. Maine in February 1898.

In February 1898, the recovered bodies of sailors who died on the United States Navy battleship *Maine* were interred in the Colon Cemetery. In December 1899 the bodies were disinterred and brought back to the United States for burial at Arlington National Cemetery.

While the remains are no longer at the Colon Cemetery, the memorial still exists is a fitting place to visit and remember the victims of the Maine and all those who have lost their lives in service of the United States.



### USINT ENCOURAGES U.S. CITIZENS RESIDING IN CUBA TO VOTE IN 2008



2008 is an important election year in the United States.

The ACS Unit encourages you to register to vote and/or request absentee ballots. The basic absentee voting process is as follows:

- Complete an application form (see below) and send it to local election officials in the U.S.
- The local official approves your request, or contacts you for further information.
- The local official sends you an absentee ballot.
- Vote the ballot and send it back in time to meet your state's deadline.

Registration and ballot request procedures and deadlines vary by state. The official US Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) <<http://www.fvap.gov>>. It contains a wealth of information about absentee voting, including the downloadable absentee ballot application (SF-76, Federal Post Card Application, or FPCA), state-specific instructions for completing the form, and links to or contact numbers for state and local officials.

USINT Havana invites you to visit the American Citizen Services office. We have registration and application forms and voting assistance guides you can use. We are also happy to answer any questions you may have about the process to get you started.

### NEW STATE DEPARTMENT WEBSITE FOR STUDENTS

[www.studentsabroad.state.gov](http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov) is the new State Department site for Students in school overseas. The site will offer college students a one-stop reference for international travel. The website offers country specific information, tips for safe travel, and other important information.



## ***Hurricane Season2008***

### **When is hurricane season?**

Hurricane season runs from the beginning of June to the end of November. The past several years have seen an overall increase in the quantity and intensity of hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico. In 2005, there were 28 named storms of which 15 became hurricanes. This proved to be the most active hurricane season in recorded history, causing billions of dollars in damage and resulting in thousands of fatalities. In 2006, there were 9 major storms including 5 hurricanes, which largely remained off land, limiting the property damage and loss of life to far below the levels witnessed in 2005.

### **What dangers or inconveniences can occur?**

American citizens who are planning to be in Cuba during hurricane season should carefully consider the potential dangers and inconveniences associated with a hurricane and should devise an emergency plan in advance of a storm's arrival. Even inland areas far from the coastline can experience destructive winds, tornadoes, and floods from tropical storms and hurricanes.

Regions affected by hurricanes and tropical storms may experience widespread damage to infrastructure and serious shortages of habitable accommodations, food, water, and medical facilities. Hurricane damage is caused by storm surge, high winds, heavy rain, flooding, mudslides, and tornadoes

### **How can I prepare?**

During the hurricane season Americans should monitor local radio and other sources of information, such as the [National Hurricane Center](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/), to stay aware of any weather developments in the area. Minor tropical storms can

## ***Hurricane Category***

▲ <b>Scale Number</b>	<b>Wind Speed</b>
▲ <b>Category 1</b>	74-95mph
▲ <b>Category 2</b>	96-110
▲ <b>Category 3</b>	111-130
▲ <b>Category 4</b>	131-155
▲ <b>Category 5</b>	>155mph

## **Emergency Preparedness Kit**

- Several clean containers for water, large enough for a 3-5 day supply of water (about five gallons for each person).
- A 3-5 day supply of non-perishable food.
- A first aid kit and manual.
- A battery-powered radio, flashlights, and extra batteries.
- Sleeping bags or extra blankets.
- Water-purifying supplies, such as chlorine or iodine tablets or unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach.
- Prescription medicines and special medical needs.
- Baby food and/or prepared formula, diapers, and other baby supplies.
- Personal hygiene supplies, such as soap, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, etc.
- An emergency kit for your car with food, flares, booster cables, maps, tools, a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, sleeping bags, etc.

## **Hurricane Web Pages:**

- [National Hurricane Center](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/)
  - <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>
- [CDC Hurricane Information](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.asp)
  - <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.asp>
- [American Red Cross Hurricane](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.asp)
  - <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.asp>
- [U.S. Coast Guard Storm Center](http://www.uscg.mil/news/stormcenter)
  - <http://www.uscg.mil/news/stormcenter>



## The American Citizens Services Unit is Here to Help!!

Here is a list of some of the emergency services we provide:

**Lost or Stolen Passports:** If you lose your passport, ACS can help you obtain a replacement. In case of theft, you should immediately report the incident to Cuban police and obtain a copy of the police report. **Medical Assistance:** If you are sick or injured, ACS can assist you in finding medical care and can contact family or a friend at your request.

**Emergency Funds:** If your money has been lost or stolen, ACS can help you contact your family or friends and arrange for them to transfer funds to you.

**Arrests:** Americans in Cuba are subject to Cuban law. In the unfortunate event that an American is arrested, the United States government cannot get the citizen out of jail. ACS can provide a list of local attorneys and legal resources, visit the arrestee to monitor treatment, and act as a liaison between family and friends in the U.S. ACS can also assist families in transferring money, food, and clothing to those being held in Cuban jails or prisons.

**Death abroad:** In the unfortunate event of a death in Cuba, we can work with family in the U.S to arrange for the transfer of remains from Cuba.

**Disasters:** ACS can contact your relatives to let them know that you are safe in the case of a natural disaster.

**Emergency situation:** It is a good idea if you give your family in the U.S the following number at the State Department to call in an emergency situation: (202) 647-5225

## *Expedited Non-Immigrant Visa Interview for Spouses and Minor Children of Americans in Cuba!*

Effective January 1, spouses and minor (under 18) children of U.S. citizens residing in Cuba may obtain expedited non-immigrant visa interviews. Applicants must present the U.S. passport of the parent or spouse and either the marriage certificate or birth certificate as appropriate on the day of the interview. Please note this service is offered as a courtesy to U.S. citizens resident in Cuba and does not change U.S. immigration law regarding eligibility for a non-immigrant visa. For more information or to schedule an expedited appointment, please call the Consular Information Unit at (537) 834-4400.



Contact Information: American Citizen Services, Consular Section,  
U.S. Interests Section, Havana, Cuba  
Address: Calzada e/ L y M. Vedad, Ciudad Habana  
Telephone: (53)(7) 8333551 to 59, Fax (57)(3) 833-1653  
Website: <http://havana.usinterestsection.gov/>  
Walk-in Hours: Mon.-Thu. 8:00-4:30pm, Fri. 8:00-3:30 pm.  
Closed U.S. & Cuban Holidays